

Love is Colorblind

By Cynthia Vespa

Blending families through adoption

Adoption is nothing new in society. But with more and more celebrities adopting children from different racial and/or cultural backgrounds, it has brought transracial adoption to the limelight. If you've been thinking about adoption, or know someone who has, this article gives some insight to the blending of cultures and families.

Transracial or transcultural adoption means placing a child who is of one race or ethnic group with adoptive parents of another race or ethnic group. In the U.S. this usually means children of color, or from another country, are placed with Caucasian parents.



People choose to adopt for a variety of reasons. Some adoption agencies have stricter rules where they do not place Caucasian children to singles or applicants older than 40.

Other reasons for adoption come from the parents' want and desire to reach out to children in need. Some prospective adoptive parents feel connected to a particular race or culture because of their ancestry or through personal experiences.

Audrey Rosenstein of Las Vegas worked for family services for 15 years before becoming a foster parent, and subsequently adopting six young, biracial children.

"In my work, I knew there was a need for quality foster care," says Rosenstein. "When our older children grew up and moved, a space in our home opened up and my husband and I decided that's what we wanted to do. We started with fostering the children and didn't officially adopt them until the parental rights were exhausted."

Preparation for adoption is even more important for parents who are considering transracial adoption over regular adoptive methods. It helps to examine your attitude about race and ethnicity to help you identify the type of child you wish to parent. Your lifestyle will come into play as well. It is important for children of color growing up with Caucasian parents to be immersed in culture and around many different ethnic groups.

Think about if you can make these types of relationships available for your adoptive child. Do you already have friends of different races and ethnic groups that you visit with regularly? If not, you might consider adopting sib-

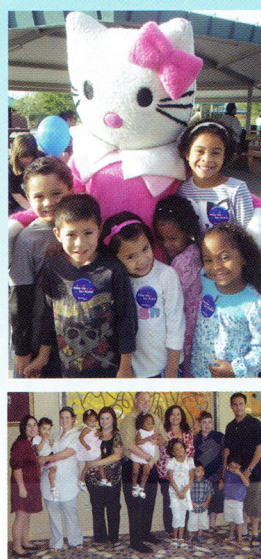
lings. Siblings who are adopted together have the security of seeing another person in the family who looks like them, which may help them adjust better to their new surroundings.

That was Rosenstein's design when she adopted her children. She made it a point to adopt as many of their siblings as she could. There can be unique challenges that come from adopting a child of another race or culture. For the Rosenstein's, being open and honest from the start is the best way to tackle any problems that may arise. She suggests talking openly with the children about the adoption, about their race and skin color.

"I do believe open communication from the beginning is best. For my family that was the only way," she says adding that she "chose them from her heart."

Rosenstein and her growing brood are very happy. She knows there are tough times that can be heart-wrenching but she continues on, knowing that Las Vegas is in desperate need of quality foster homes and that these children deserve a good home.

"Our children have given us much more than we've given them," she says. "All these children need is love and they will thrive." ♦



Tips for parents in a transracial or transcultural family:

- Become intensely invested in parenting
- Tolerate no racially or ethnically biased remarks
- Surround yourselves with supportive family & friends
- Celebrate all cultures
- Talk about race & culture
- Expose your child to a variety of experiences so that he or she develops physical and intellectual skills that build self-esteem
- Take your child to places where most of the people present are from his or her race or ethnic group

Thinking of adopting of becoming a foster parent? Try these places of interest:

- Department of Family Services, which can also help with private adoption, 702.455.0181 or dcfs.state.nv.us
- Clark County Foster Adoptive Parents Association, clarkcountyfapa.org
- Private adoption through places such as churches, etc.

